

THE LAST KISS ON EARTH

Although she could hardly walk anymore
even to the door or answer the telephone
my mother still liked to dance, jiggle
a gentle jitterbug in her pajamas to
Glenn Miller's "In the Mood" and liked to
tell me how she used to jitterbug in
World War 2 with soldiers and sailors
at the Starlight Ballroom after her shift
as hatcheck girl and then she'd sneak
out before she had to tell them she was
married to a medic stationed in Algeria
but one night a sailor followed her and
grabbed her in the park and kissed her,
and when she slapped and kicked him he
wept, said he was sorry, but tomorrow he
was shipping out for the war and she might be
the last girl he'd ever kiss in his life.

How sad, I said, how romantic, and my
mother said, oh, honey, he was just drunk
and those sailors could sure hand you
a line.

ARTHUR, WRITE US

Although it'd been more than forty years
since she lived in Texas, my mother
still had a bit of a drawl, said wrench
for rinse, Arthur, write us, for arthritis,
used localisms like dob and scrooch
so I dobbed her itchy spots with witch hazel,
I scrooched her pillow just right
beneath her head, I helped her wrench
after her meals, and I wished that
there were really an Arthur someplace
who would write us, send us his love,
maybe some money to buy roses
to tide us over until he caught his
flight on a jet plane to rush to us
and make everything okay.